



## Editorial Introduction



We seem to be entering an era when we can say there is genuine understanding of some issues. And it is an era in which those issues may transcend local regions. This journal will attempt to concentrate on them. *The first concerns teachers.* Teachers are of unquestionable importance, but the pre-service training and licensing of teachers is not. On the other hand, three papers in this issue suggest that the in-service or apprenticeship training of teachers can have a significant effect. In their article, Matthew A.M. Thomas Carolyn M. Thomas and Elizabeth E. Lefebvre, "Dissecting the Teacher Monolith: Experiences of Beginning Basic School Teachers in Zambia" suggest that beginning teachers have clear and altruistic motives which with the right kind of support can be maximized. Ciaran Sugrue, Dominic B. Wyse, Alicia T. Fentiman, and Seonghye Moon in their article "English Language Teaching and Whole School Professional Development in Tanzania," hold that in-service training affects the quality of teachers' pedagogy, practice and understanding of the subject matter. And Harini Raval, Susan McKenney, and Jules Pieters, in their article "Summative Evaluation of an Ongoing Professional Development Program for Para-Teachers to Strengthen Remedial Teaching in Indian Slums" suggest that a professional development program helped teachers retain and improve learner-centered lesson planning and other skills. These, in turn, helped generate impressive gains in student achievement.

The second concerns *the role of schooling in the creation of strong 'agency'* (the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices). In her article titled "Community School Programmes in Latin America: Imagining the Long-Term Impact of Developing Pupils' Agency", Cristina Azaola argues that certain kinds of community schools are particularly effective. In fact they may help develop characters in a fashion parallel to the ideals outlined by M.S. Archer and Amartya Sen. In the article "Education and Social Change in Post-Conflict and Post Disaster Aceh, Indonesia", Ritesh Shah and Mieke T.A. Lopes Cardozo argue that in an environment of economic and social collapse such as existed in Aceh, education can assist in building social cohesion. They do point out however, that agreement on educational access, management structure, acknowledgement of certain kinds of diversity and strategies of reconstruction are necessary for schooling to have its intended social cohesion effect. Perhaps the point is that education cannot create strong agency without parallel agreement on more global issues.

Although much education progress has been achieved, *the third issue concerns development agendas which remain unaddressed or have been generated by previous policies.* For instance, it is commonly recognized that low-income communities cannot

afford universal education free of private cost through university and that finding methods of efficiency, income-generation and lower cost is part of the education system's responsibility. But if fees are raised, how does that affect those who cannot afford them? Will they not have to make strategic choices about how to invest? And if the economic returns to education are ambiguous or clearly negative, what are consumers to do when their educational sacrifice may be counter-productive? In the article titled *The Poverty Trap of Education: Education-Poverty Connections in Western China* Huafeng Zhang argues that investing heavily in education without sufficient rewards places families in a 'poverty trap'. Those in the poverty trap face a dilemma: should they borrow money to educate their children or avoid debt and forgo the chance of occupational mobility. In the article titled: "Children's Cognitive Ability, Schooling and Work: Evidence from Ethiopia" Seife Dendir argues that the poor have to make investment choices and may well choose those children to attend school who have higher cognitive abilities, hence as an investment, may be more profitable. Both articles point out that in certain circumstances, to not invest in education may be a rational choice.

In her article titled: "Are We Using Friedman's Roadmap? A Comparative Analysis of Stimuli of Private School Enrolments in Post-Soviet Countries" Maia Chankseliani suggests that the managerial responsibility on the part of education may be interpreted as being the equivalent of market 'neo-liberalism'. The fifteen countries of the former Soviet Union had no private sectors prior to the break-up of the Soviet Union and have only fleetingly accepted the principles of education marketisation. A viable alternative, however, particularly in the low income countries such as Kyrgyzstan and Moldova, may not clear.

On the other hand, Guy Le Fanu in his article titled: "International Development, Disability, and Education: Towards a Capabilities-Focused Discourse and Praxis" focuses attention on an agenda whose time has come and that is the strategies to integrate students with disabilities into the mainstream. His point, however, is to suggest that this is neither charity nor an issue to be solved by way of a campaign. All students have diverse potentials, he argues, and those should be addressed by means of a 'capability-focused' approach. He also is quick to point out that significant obstacles remain.

These themes of teachers, the creation of strong character and unmet agendas will likely be continued in future issues of the *International Journal of Educational Development*.

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